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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted during spring 1993 of 29 women educators in New Brunswick, Canada, who had either obtained a position or who were actively seeking a position in educational administration. About 25 percent of administrators in the Anglophone school system are women. The largest percentage of these women administrators are in rural school districts. This study was designed to determine some of the reasons for the relatively low percentage of women administrators. The respondents described their experiences in obtaining educational administration positions. Of the 29 women interviewed, 19 held administrative positions at the time of the study. The majority were vice principals in smaller school districts. The women had an average of 16 years of teaching experience but only 3 years of administrative experience. None had entered teaching intending to become administrators. Many respondents said that as women they brought special skills to their positions such as encouraging communication, collaborative leadership style, team work, and frequent expression of appreciation and encouragement. Some respondents said they had experienced gender-based obstacles to doing their jobs. Although the number of women administrators is increasing, more needs to be done to encourage women to enter the field. (Contains 18 references.) (JPT)

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**EDUCATORS AND VISIONARIES:
WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
IN
NEW BRUNSWICK**

Research Report for Grant No. UNB 24-66

By

Barbara A. Gill

Division of Educational Foundations

University of New Brunswick

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REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of a study conducted in New Brunswick in the Spring of 1993. The study investigated the experiences of twenty-nine women educators who had either obtained a position or who were actively seeking a position in educational administration.

Women educational administrators make up approximately twenty-five percent of all administrators in the Anglophone school system. The largest percentage of these female administrators are in rural school districts in kindergarten through grade six schools. Both the New Brunswick Department of Education and the New Brunswick Teachers' Association have indicated their support for strategies designed to increase the percentage of women in positions of educational leadership.

This study was designed to investigate some of the reasons for the relatively low percentage of women in positions of educational leadership in the province. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, participants were asked to describe their experiences in obtaining positions in educational administration.

Of the twenty-nine women who participated in the study, nineteen held administrative positions at the time of the interviews. The majority were vice-principals in one of the smaller school districts. Participants had, on average, sixteen years of teaching experience but only three years of

administrative experience. None of the participants had entered teaching with the aim of becoming an administrator and most had not considered a career in administration until it was suggested by someone else. Taking graduate courses, being involved in and holding office in professional organizations and "on the job" training were listed as the most useful methods of preparing for administrative positions.

Many of the participants indicated that, because they were women, they brought special skills and attributes to the role of educational administrator. They identified themselves as "people people" with leadership styles built on collaboration, team work, good communication and a readiness to express appreciation and encouragement. Their major focus was on providing the best possible environment for the students in the school.

Only two of the participants who held administrative positions felt they had experienced barriers or obstacles in their search for their administrative positions. However, most participants described a number of situations in which the attitudes and perceptions of both fellow teachers and community members could act as barriers to operating effectively as an administrator. Most frequently mentioned was the perception that educational administration, particularly at the junior high and high school level, was not a woman's job. Some participants felt there were a

number of capable women who were not considering administration as a career.

Although the percentage of women in positions of educational leadership in New Brunswick is increasing, incentives at both the provincial and the local school district level are still needed in order to encourage women teachers to consider careers in educational administration.

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Women in Educational Administration in New Brunswick is a study which was devised to examine the reasons for the low representation of women in positions of educational leadership in the province of New Brunswick. Figures for (1992-1993) indicate that the percentage of women holding administrative positions in the Anglophone school system is twenty-six percent, yet the percentage of women members of the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA) is sixty-one percent.

A recent NBTA study (1992) indicated that in spite of concerted efforts to provide leadership training sessions and financial incentives for women to qualify for the Principal's Certificate there has been little change in the number of women administrators since 1973. As of September 1992, in the province as a whole, two hundred and eighty-two males and one hundred and twenty-seven females held Principal's Certificates but did not have administrative positions (Sheehan, 1993). Figures for the Anglophone school districts are two hundred and twelve males and eighty-five females (Sheehan, 1993). As a result, both the NBTA and the Government of New Brunswick has identified encouraging more women to seek positions of responsibility in educational administration as one of their priorities. In March 1993 the Department of Education announced that tuition costs would be paid for women students, back-dated to Fall 1992, for all courses leading to the New Brunswick Principal's Certificate.

The purpose of the study was to find out what encourages, motivates and supports women teachers in New Brunswick to seek training for educational leadership, apply for positions in educational leadership and remain in leadership positions. The possible existence of barriers to obtaining and remaining in leadership positions was also examined. The initial phase of the study consisted of a review the Department of Education statistics and a review of the literature on incentives and barriers for women seeking positions in educational leadership. Interview questions were devised from this review of literature. The second phase of the study consisted of in-depth interviews with women educators in New Brunswick who had attended the New Brunswick Centre for Educational Administration (NBCEA) Assessment Program between 1988 and 1992. The third phase of the study will be follow-up interviews with the participants in three, five and ten years' time.

A study of this nature is important at this time because results from the study can be used to suggest appropriate motivators, support systems and encouragement for women teachers to seek training for positions in educational administration. Existing barriers can be identified and broken down.

Current Situation in New Brunswick

A review of the Department of Education School Directory (Department of Education, 1992) revealed the following statistics.

Table 1: Provincial Percentages of Women Administrators

Administrator	Anglophone	Francophone	Total
Superintendent	3/12 25%	2/6 33%	5/18 27.7%
Assist. Sup.	4/16 18.75%	1/8 12.5%	4/24 16.6%
Supervisor	19/51 37%	28/47 59.5%	47/98 47.95%
Principal	55/268 20%	37/143 25.8%	92/411 22.38%
Total	81/347 23%	68/204 33.33%	148/551 26%

Over the past few years women have been appointed in growing numbers to vice-principalships. Table 2 indicates that the percentage of female vice-principals has increased steadily since 1988. However, the percentage of women in the teaching profession overall has also increased so the total number of female vice-principals must continue to rise just to maintain the status quo (see Table 3) (Paulette Moore, personal communication, May 1993).

Table 2: Percentage of Female Vice-Principals in Anglophone Districts

Year	Total V-P	Male V-P	Female V-P	% Female V-P
1988-89	208	165	45	21.69
1989-90	208	160	48	23
1990-91	217	159	58	26.7
1991-92	226	160	66	29.2
1992-93	220	149	71	32.27

Source: Department of Education School Directory 1992-1993

Table 3: Percentage of Female Vice-Principals and Female Teachers in Anglophone School Districts

Year	Total Teachers	Female Teachers	Male Teachers	Female Total of Percent	Percent of Female VP
1988-89	5463	3287	2176	60.16%	21.62%
1989-90	5474	3327	2147	60.77%	23%
1990-91	5543	3390	2153	61.15%	26.7%
1991-92	5757	3635	2122	63.14%	29.2%
1992-93	5757	3660	2097	63.57%	32.27%

Source: New Brunswick Teachers' Association

Table 4 shows that the number of students in schools with female principals. As the age of the students rises the percentage in schools with female principals declines. Older students have less chance than younger students of seeing women in positions of educational leadership and of being influenced by women leaders.

Table 4: Provincial Totals by Grade Level for Students with Female Principals

Grade Level	Total Enrollment	Students with Female Principals	%age of Total with Female Principals
Kindergarten	5,841	1,396	23.9%
Grades 1-6	41,723	6,543	15.68%
Grades 7-9	22,110	2,315	10.47%
Grades 10-12	23,980	2,119	8.86%
Provincial Totals	93,193	12,373	13.28%

Source: New Brunswick Teachers' Association

Table 5: Percentage of Women Administrators by Anglophone School District

District	Superntd.	Ast. Sup.	Supervir.	Principal	Total
2 14,588	F 100%	M/M 100%	2/5 40%	4/33 12.12%	7/41 19.51%
4 6,025	M 0%	M 0%	1/2 50%	4/19 21.05%	5/23 21.73%
6 8,708	M 0%	F 100%	1/5 20%	3/18 16.66%	5/25 20%
8 15,622	F 100%	F/M 50%	5/7 71%	12/50 24%	19/60 31.66%
10 4,83-6	M 0%	M 0%	0/6 0%	5/18 27.77%	5/26 19.23%
12 4,981	M 0%	M 0%	1/1 100%	2/14 14.28%	3/17 17.64%
13 5,090	M 0%	M 0%	1/4 25%	7/21 33%	8/27 29.62%
14 3,016	M 0%	M 0%	2/2 100%	3/9 33%	5/13 38.46%
15 3,008	M 0%	M 0%	1/3 33%	3/10 30%	4/15 26.66%
16 8,147	M 0%	M/M 0%	1/4 25%	3/23 13.04%	4/30 13.33%
17 5,737	F 100%	F 100%	3/7 42.85%	2/18 11%	7/27 25.92%
18 13,515	M 0%	M/M 0%	1/5 20%	7/35 20%	8/43 18.60%

Source: New Brunswick Department of Education School Directory 1992-1993

If the percentage of female administrators in the Anglophone school system is examined by school district (Table 5) it can be seen that the larger percentages of

female administrators are in the small, rural school districts. The implications of these figures are important. The majority of the female administrators are in the rural districts of the province and are leaders of K through 6 schools.

The New Brunswick Department of Education unveiled plans to address this situation. Program summaries from Excellence in Education (1992) indicated that the Minister's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues in Education would work with the Department of Education and the New Brunswick Teachers' Association to implement strategies for increasing the number of women in educational leadership positions. One of the suggested strategies was to establish bursaries to assist with the cost of obtaining a Principal's Certificate. In March 1993 the Department of Education announced that tuition costs would be paid to women students, back-dated to Fall 1992, for all courses leading to the New Brunswick Principal's Certificate.

The New Brunswick Centre for Educational Administration (NBCEA), provides the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Assessment Program for educational leadership candidates. In order to attend participants must be supported by their school boards. It should be noted that women tend to perform better than men in the assessment process (Schmitt & Cohen, 1990). Other agencies have addressed the issue of the low representation of women in educational leadership and attempted to suggest ways of

addressing the lack of women in leadership positions (NBTEA Women's Issues Committee, 1992).

Incentives and Barriers: A Review of Literature

Much of the literature on women in administration has focussed on barriers, though studies can be found which identify incentives and supports. Hoffman (1991), in a survey of sixty-seven female public school leaders, identified a number of factors which might be considered incentives or supports for aspiring female public school leaders. These factors included family support and encouragement, advanced level graduate study, particularly at the doctoral level, above-average communication and interpersonal skills and mentoring and networking relationships.

Networking and an effective communication system was described as important to women seeking school leadership positions in other studies. Evetts (1987) identified a network of good contacts and a supportive school district as two essential factors in becoming a school principal. A supportive senior administrator, who recognized talents and provided opportunities for experience and growth, was found to be one of the important factors in the career development of the four women educators participating in a study by Young (1991).

In a study on administrative selection in Oregon in 1977-78 Schmuck and Wyant (1981) found that stereotypes of what was considered women's work and man's work was a

powerful predictor of a woman's chances of obtaining an administrative position. Special recruitment efforts, however, could increase a woman's chances of being selected for an administrative position.

Benn (1989) suggested there was a need to challenge the assumed qualities needed for positions of authority. Was, for example, hardness, ruthlessness, competitiveness, objectivity and detachment to be preferred for an educational leader over humanity, cooperation, humanistic management and social sensitivity?

A number of factors have been identified as barriers to women obtaining positions in educational administration. These barriers include poor self-image, lack of confidence, lack of aspiration or motivation, lack of support and encouragement, home and family responsibilities, lack of preparation or experience, the effects of socialization and sex discrimination in hiring practices (Shakeshaft, 1989). Kanter (1977) found that the structure of an organization limits the aspirations of its members. Where people believe themselves to be limited by the structure of the organization they limit their own aspirations.

Other studies which have analyzed factors which help and hinder women obtaining administrative positions in education suggest other factors should be considered. Attfield (1991) concluded that the professional socialization process played a key role in determining whether women obtained administrative positions. Within the

school system studies, Attfield found that the primary focus was on the formal socialization practices rather than on the informal socialization practices. Yet the informal socialization practices were found to have a great deal of influence on administrative candidates during the anticipatory stage. There was a need to understand the informal socialization process (Attfield, 1991).

Women aspirants for administrative positions studied by Edson (1981) cited lack of experience as one of the barriers they faced. These women felt they were in a double-bind. They were told in interviews that they could not be hired because they lacked experience yet they were given no opportunity to gain that experience because females were not seen as appropriate candidates for administrative positions. Men appeared to be selected on potential but women had to prove themselves before they could be selected. They saw themselves caught in a vicious circle.

Rees (1991) examined the perception of school superintendents that there was a lack of qualified female candidates for positions of educational administration and found that candidates did exist and that their number was growing. Smith (1991) found that the number of female candidates completing the Ontario Principal's Certification had risen from about thirty-eight per year to over ten times that number by 1987. Rees (1991) proposed two reasons for the under representation of women in administrative position. First, institutional criteria could prevent women

from applying and block women from winning the competition. Second, individual women, as products of society, the educational system and their own unique characteristics, could be reluctant to apply for leadership positions.

The conclusions reached by Robinson (1991) in her examination of the reasons for the low percentage of women in leadership positions included: 1) most women entered the teaching profession because of personal motivation or societal pressure, 2) few women perceived themselves as leaders and most pursued administration on the encouragement of colleagues and mentors, 3) the women failed to develop career plan, 4) the most commonly cited perceived barriers were gender-bias and family responsibilities and 5) many women experienced feelings of guilt and insecurity regarding their personal lives. Shakeshaft (1989) believes that all these barriers can best be understood if they are analyzed through the framework of the male dominated and male defined world of educational administration.

The Women in Administration in New Brunswick Study

What are the experiences of women who wish to enter educational administration in New Brunswick? What factors assist women in their search for administrative positions? Are there barriers or obstacles to their achieving their goals? In order to answer these questions a study was devised which examined the experiences of a group of women teachers who were searching for or who had obtained a position in educational administration in New Brunswick.

Location of the Sample

The forty-three women who had participated in the New Brunswick Centre for Educational Administration Assessment Program from 1988 through 1992 were contacted by the Centre's Director and asked if they would agree to participate in the study. Twenty-nine or sixty-seven percent agreed. Each participant was then contacted by the researcher and a time for an interview set up. The time and location were chosen by the participant. Each participant was promised confidentiality and anonymity.

This group of women was chosen for two reasons. Their participation in the NBCEA Assessment Centre could be taken as an indication of their willingness to search actively for an administrative position and, as their school boards were responsible for funding their participation in the Assessment Centre, they were the individuals receiving support in their career goals, at least to the extent of participating in the assessment process.

Data Gathering Methods

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to obtain data for the study. Interviews lasted from twenty minutes to two and one half hours and consisted of a series of open-ended questions which were developed from the review of literature. These questions asked for demographic information, information on initial interest in educational administration, support, encouragement and motivation to obtain a leadership position, the presence of any barriers

to obtaining administrative positions and future career goals. Although there were specific questions, informants were invited to talk about any other issues they wished to raise. A separated schedule of questions was developed for people who were still searching for or training for their first administrative positions. In addition, each participant was asked if she would be willing to participate in a longitudinal study over the next three, five and ten years. All participants agreed. Interview tapes were transcribed and the transcription verified by each participant.

Results

Participants

Twenty-nine women educators volunteered for the study, representing sixty-seven percent of the women initially contacted by the Director of the NBCEA. Twelve (41%) were vice-principals and nine (31%) were classroom teachers looking for administrative positions. Three (10%) were Central Office administrators and three (10%) were principals. The other two were Methods and Resource teachers. On average the participants had sixteen years teaching experience and three years in the current administrative positions. There was at least one volunteer from each Anglophone school district in the province. All school levels were represented and there were volunteers from urban, suburban and rural areas. The average years of teaching experience of these administrators was sixteen

years but the average number of years spent in administrative positions was only three years.

Initial Interest in Administration

Most of the participants had not considered applying for administrative positions until it was suggested by someone else. The encouragement came most frequently from a colleague in a school administrative position.

. . . the vice-principal at the time transferred and, actually I hadn't given it much thought, but the principal at the time suggested and a few other teachers asked me whether I was going to apply for it and I hadn't given it much consideration. And then I thought, well, maybe I should.

Some of the participants remember becoming interested in administration as a result of taking on some administrative responsibilities. The principal of a small rural school was to be away for three months and the district asked the teachers to take on the administrative tasks.

. . . there were two of us interested in doing that little bit extra. And it was almost like getting hooked . . . And I let them know I enjoyed what I had been doing and if something should come up . . . I would be interested.

When a principal announced at a staff meeting that a position was coming vacant, one vice-principal remembers thinking

. . . I could do that, I would like to do that. Really, that's the first that I even thought about being interested in it.

Another participant had a vision of what a school could be and how it should be run. The desire to bring this vision to reality lead her to administration.

It wasn't with the person sitting in the office, it was out there being with teachers and being with kids, and listening and looking and learning everything.

Not one of the participants indicated that she had entered teaching with the aim of becoming an administrator.

Preparation for Administration

A number of activities were listed as good preparation for administrative responsibility. The most frequently mentioned was studying for and obtaining a Masters degree and a Principal's Certificate. Also listed as important was the experience gained from involvement in professional groups. Holding office in a professional organization or community group had given a number of the participants an opportunity to practice leadership skills.

I've done other things outside school that are leadership things. I've been a director for NBTA, different positions in the district, vice-president, president, secretary, all of those positions. I'm on an advisory committee for coaching.

A number of districts had initiated Leadership 2000, one strand of which could be a series of developmental workshops on educational administration. These workshops, along with other workshops such as Women in Administration in New Brunswick, were instrumental in helping women administrators prepare for their roles. Many participants credited the NBCEA Assessment Centre with providing them with valuable feedback which helped them prepare for the role of administrator.

Going to the Assessment Centre was probably a good experience in that it let me know some of the areas that I thought I was better at than I actually was . .

. it did allow me to question certain things and say, "well, maybe you're not as wonderful as you thought you were." So it pointed out areas of strength.

Many of the vice-principals felt their principals had provided them with valuable on-the-job training during the first months in the position.

If he gave me something to do it was always kind of breaking me in easily---"this is what I'd like you to do" . . . "Here, I'm going to give you this file that we have been keeping on this for the past two or three years and it will kind of give you an idea of where to go and how to begin and all that sort of stuff. If you have any questions come and ask and I will help." And for me it was almost like an internship. But I learned more I think from on-the-job than I might have learned in other schools from other principals.

I had a very supportive principal at the time . . . he spent a lot of time with me as far as assisting me with things that I needed to do. And he was very good as far as giving me responsibility . . . he had me timetable . . . Actually it was more of having to learn things that I needed as I went along.

I have a principal who is very supportive, who has been in administration for a while, who has gone through a lot of the rough times, we all do, but is willing to say, okay, you're good at this, I'm good at this, let's share those talents and work together rather than trying each of us to work on our own thing and not support each other.

A background in special education and guidance and counselling were considered helpful, if not essential, for being an administrator. In the words of one vice-principal,

What is it if it isn't guidance? It's guidance of parents, guidance of teachers and guidance of kids. And not that we should do the counselling but if you have that frame of reference you react differently in situations.

Two of the participants mentioned that "being a woman" and raising a family was excellent preparation for being an administrator. A central office administrator spoke of a

more senior administrator helping her realize that she already had the skills needed to do the job.

One principal described the role she played in developing strengths within her staff. She emphasized the importance of delegating responsibility to all members of staff.

If there is a barrier I guess it's people not being out there and knowing the strengths of people that are with them in the building to encourage them to take these leadership roles. Perhaps there are not opportunities delegated to individuals who have particular strengths within the school to take leadership roles. I believe that if a school only has one leader it's in great trouble because nobody can be a leader in everything.

Obtaining the First Administrative Position

In discussing the factors which contributed to their obtaining their first administrative position the term "luck" appeared again and again.

I happen to be one of those people who are really lucky. I happened to be in the right place and the right.

This quotation is typical of statements that were made again and again throughout the interviews. Individual strengths and talents were not mentioned at first.

After prompting from the researcher, "What else, besides luck?", hard work, good communication skills and ability to get on with other people were mentioned.

I think I'm a good listener. I work well with people. I'm not here for ego purposes---put me on a pedestal type of thing. I like working with people and trying to bring out the good things in them, making them feel like they're contributing. I think for me that is being a good administrator.

With the emphasis in the province on recruiting women, unsuccessful male candidates can protect their egos and console themselves with the thought that they are victims of sexual discrimination.

. . . the occasional sour grape---in the fact that the reason you got the job was because you're a female---but, for the most part, everyone was quite supportive and enthusiastic.

Most of the people---I heard---who were annoyed that I got the position because I was female were men---other people who felt they were equally well qualified and the determining factor was that I was female.

Or maybe the best applicants, rather than the best male applicants are now being appointed to administrative positions.

Perceptions of Self as Administrator

All the participants mentioned the importance of collaboration, teamwork and good communication in the way they approached their jobs.

I'm very much a committee person and so I communicate in a committee situation and I find that male principals that I've worked with tend to be a little bit more authoritarian and talk down in communicating . . . The positives and negatives are there for both sides. My way takes for ever and when you have to have a certain decision by a certain deadline, my way doesn't seem to work but that's what I'm comfortable with.

Most of the participants spoke of the importance of being involved with students and believed the most important part of their work was educating students. One or two felt ambivalent about seeking administrative positions which would take them further away from students. All of the participants talked in some way of being teachers first.

This point was made by a vice-principal who was being urged to apply for a principalship. She was resisting because as she watched her principal she noticed

I see him being very, very removed from teaching children. I sometimes see his job almost as a plant manager. And I don't want that.

In some cases the philosophy of communication and collaboration was seen as a woman's approach, suggesting that men and women brought different perspectives and skills to administration.

I find there's a good balance between having a male and a female persona in administration, whether principal or vice-principal, either one. There are always people you have difficulty dealing with no matter what your style so if there are students in this school that I can't deal with maybe the principal can deal with and visa versa. He'll come to me and say, "Look, I just don't know what to do with this kid, I've tried everything and I can't get through to him." And I'll say, "Look, I know this and this about this kid and I think we should handle it differently." And, O.K. we'll do that. It's a nice combination rather than sticking to one method of treating everyone the same.

A difference of approach was seen in the ability to be aware of and take care of details. The suggestion was made that women found it easier to say, "Thank you" and express appreciation.

Women find it easier, a lot of times, to be inviting than men. I don't think we're as threatened by saying to someone, "I think you did a good job" or "Thank you, I appreciate that."

Doing a good job was very important to these women administrators. Putting in time and effort was something they did as a matter of course. Many spoke of wanting to do everything possible to improve the job they were doing.

Barriers

When asked directly whether they had faced any barriers or obstacles to obtaining administrative positions, most of the respondents made comments similar to these.

I have to admit that I've been very lucky. I can't personally say that I have, because being a female, that I have met any barriers.

No. None that I can think of. Even though we had changed superintendents and went from a female to a male it didn't make any difference there whatsoever. My principal is very supportive of females being in administration and he tries to encourage people, females in particular, to take positions of responsibility. I really can't think of any.

Gee, I don't think so. I really can't think of anything that was a barrier, if it was a matter of applying for all the jobs that I've gotten and being successful in getting them.

No, I really didn't. And it's partially a reflection on this school district. I believe that they encourage all of their staff to, like my mother, go forward and do the best they can.

I've been very fortunate in that I have had a lot of support. I know that's not the case in every school. But anything I want to do I'm encouraged to do and more.

The women who did believe there were barriers spoke in these terms.

I think there are barriers right now . . . If you are married and a woman, then you are expected to follow your husband.

. . . right now here we're male dominated although we have women in certain positions but we're still male dominated.

In applying [for a position] probably. If there were six board members I suspect that there was at least one that felt that this shouldn't be a female administrator, especially the top position, so to speak. Of the others, I think they felt strongly that . . . there should be a male counterpart. That there shouldn't be two females. I don't think they would

express the same concern that there shouldn't be two males.

However further discussion with the women who felt there were no barriers to them personally revealed that there were situations which existed that could work against their obtaining a position or functioning effectively in an administrative position. A vice-principal discussed her wish to obtain a principal's position and her current principal's reaction to her goal.

This is his thirty-fifth year in teaching and I think that he sometimes would question whether I would be forceful enough because he's got a definite attitude of what the boss is that I don't necessarily see the boss being.

A teacher who wanted to become an administrator saw taking university courses as a barrier.

You've got to go back to school and learn all these things . . . I'm not exactly sure that the things that you would learn in university are really sort of applicable to what's in the real situation.

Another participant felt that the attitude of some of her professors at university had been condescending. While the professors might not directly influence the hiring process they could cause individuals to doubt their career aspirations.

A couple of professors that I took courses from I found to be a little bit time set back in the fifties . . . there were a few that I thought even though they're teaching in the 1990's had it in the back of their heads somewhere---this is a man's game and we'll pay you lip service and we'll include you in our courses and we'll give you a Masters certificate, the degree and the whole bit---but I still sensed very much that a few of them were rather condescending and I don't even think they were aware of it. I really think if I asked them they would consider themselves very enlightened, current up-to-date men.

The perceived need to have contacts among those responsible for hiring was also described as a barrier.

It's very political . . . if you don't know someone on the personnel committee, forget it . . . I see that as an obstacle because I am not a politically oriented person and I see no reason why I should be nice to someone for a year or two just to get a job.

A central office administrator described her frustration at trying to get women teachers to apply for vacancies in the district.

But no luck with those three ladies and that's kind of sad. Because they would be excellent people and they just thought, "Well, you know, I just can't do it, I can't listen to the hassles, I couldn't put in the time."

Obstacles and barriers experienced on the job took a number of forms. The most frequently mentioned was the effect of the perception, particularly at the junior high and senior high school level, that women could not cope with all the demands of the position. They were hired because they were women and not because of their talents and therefore were bound to be ineffective. A perception that a senior high school or junior high school administrator had to be a "tough guy" contributed to this perception.

The only negative thing is the perception around here that women get the job. And maybe that is a barrier for actually carrying out your job more than getting the position because some men have the mind set that women cannot do the job . . . but give credit to the men who came up to me after a year and said, "You've proved me wrong. Darned glad to have you around."

For example, there will be discipline problem downstairs or whatever and they'll buzz up at the office and the other two male administrators are not there but she is and they say, "Well never mind." So her authority is being undermined in that particular incident. . . . I find the male staff particularly

have that attitude. The female staff does not have that attitude.

In rural areas women administrators, as women in authority, were not always readily accepted.

I find sometimes the bus drivers will bring in discipline problems and I suggest an alternate---they really don't like taking direction from a female. There's a tendency if the principal is here to take the problems to him because he's a male even though I'm the one that's been on bus duty. And [the principal] sends them in here and they seem to be a little embarrassed--that they have to bring a discipline problem to a female. So that's probably a barrier.

A principal described her experiences as the only female at principals' meetings. While the male principals offered to help her and were willing to give advice when asked, she sensed their resentment when she offered ideas and suggestions at meetings and appeared to take her responsibilities more seriously than they thought appropriate.

I was the only female at the principals' meeting. I never in my life felt such a strong "old boys network" attitude being displayed although surface conversations and so on were always polite, collegial and "anything I can do to help you" . . . it would be rolled eyeballs, or at coffee breaks, "What's with you today, lay off, we don't want to be here all day. This is only a morning meeting."

The perception that a Central Office administrative position was a reward for service was also apparent.

One of the key things was they felt I was very young to get this position and I guess I never thought of myself as being that young. I never thought that administrative positions were for old people. Some people felt that way. That it was a reward for after so many years of service. I guess I've never felt that way. That was a shock when people started saying that. But people obviously perceived that. That you paid your dues and there was going to be this reward.

Why So Few Women in Administration

The participants were asked why they felt there were so few women in administration in the province. The most frequent response was that women still took on the major responsibility for the home and family.

I think in the past society has lead women to take the homemaker role and that you had to put your children first. I don't have any problem with that. I think your family is important and does come first. I think a lot of families expected that women to go into nursing, teaching or secretarial work---all women's jobs. I think it's changing.

If women teachers are really interested in administration I don't think the barriers are financial. I think a lot of the barriers, especially to married females come from the expectations that they have in their family lives because it does take time. I've got to be able to go to meetings in the evening. I've got to be able to go away to conferences. Not every conference is held in the city so you've got to have a husband and support system in place so that if I have to go to B.C. for a week I can do that without causing me a lot of stress. And I think that is one of the major obstacles.

The perception that administration was a male profession also held women back from considering a career in educational administration.

I think it's very much a personal woman's mindset of teachers. . . . I see many people who are really capable of doing this but it's a sense of they don't even think of it. . . . Then they think, "Oh, who needs the hassle" because they've got these other demands and a lot of people who go into teaching do it because that's what they want to do most is teach. And they don't want the paper work and they don't want those other things.

It's not by and large what most teachers see themselves as doing, being administrators. They see themselves as being teachers and I think it's something that most people have the basic kinds of skills probably in teaching to become quite able administrators. Because it's an extension of those same sk'lls that make you a good teacher that make you a good administrator too.

I still think many women see it as a "guy job", especially principals.

Attitudes to Special Incentives for Women

The participants were also asked for their views on the latest government incentive of providing tuition bursaries to women who wished to take courses towards their Principal's Certificate. Most of the women were against the incentive or had ambivalent feelings about it. The comments below are typical of the reactions.

I have some problems with incentives for women going on to learn. I think they need to be encouraged to go and maybe the financial is needed. I don't think someone should be given a job just because they are a woman and I don't believe they should be denied one because they are a woman. I think if applicants apply for a job the best one should get it, man or woman. And that bothers me when they say, We have to give it to her because she's a woman." I don't think that should happen. We should be treated equal.

I think we have to think of other ways of getting women into those fields. I think it should start in grade school and work its way through.

However, a single parent saw the bursary as a way to finally earn her Certificate.

I am a single parent and I have two children. I'm their total support. I don't get any other outside maintenance support or anything for my children. It's just me. And it's not always easy financially to decide, well gosh, I'm going to go and take this course because my money is pretty tied up, making sure my kids have stuff, my mortgage payment and those kind of things, even this is going to make it a lot easier for me.

Future Career Plans

All participants spoke of the importance of teaching to their career lives. In addition, wanting to learn as much as possible from the current job came across as a priority.

Of those women who had made career plans for the future or who had career aspirations spoke of wishing to become principals or principals of larger schools. Three women were hoping to become supervisors in the area of curriculum development at the district central office and one vice-principal planned to obtain a PhD and become a university professor, teaching preservice teachers. No one mentioned wishing to become a superintendent or an assistant superintendent. When asked about these positions, one principal rejected the idea.

No, and you know why? I can answer that real easily. Because I've seen friends of mine who are in those positions and they don't get out to be with people.

Discussion

The preliminary results of this phase of the study appear to be consistent with much of the literature. The length of time spent in teaching as opposed to the length of time spent in administration is a different proportion than would be found in a comparable group of male administrators. Female teachers spend longer in teaching prior to obtaining administrative positions than do male teachers. The majority of the female administrators were at the vice-principal level, and in kindergarten through grade six or nine schools in the rural school districts of the province. Similar findings have been reported by Edson (1988) and Shakeshaft (1989).

The tendency to attribute success at gaining an administrative position to luck rather than personal talents

and strengths and the initial interest in administration being the results of encouragements from others are also found in other studies. These perceptions by the participants may be a reflection of their socialization in an era when women did not "push themselves forward" or see themselves as leaders.

Most of the participants had not considered applying for an administrative position until it was suggested by someone else. This suggests the possibility that there is a difference between the career goals of the majority of males versus the majority of females who enter teaching. It may be that most men enter teaching in order to become administrators while most women enter teaching in order to become teachers. It may also indicate that women do not see administration as a "path upwards".

Strategies for helping women teachers learn more about administration were suggested. "Principal for a day", having different teachers take on the principal's responsibilities when that individual is away, can introduce women to the role of principal and what it entails. Rotating administrative positions every few years could allow more interested teachers a chance to experience these roles with the knowledge that they were not making a lifetime commitment to one position.

Some of these positions being rotating positions where you held them for, I think it would be a great sense of empowerment and also, it's easy enough to sit in these positions and criticize sometimes but let's all have a chance to do it and then I think we'd realize a whole

lot better the kinds of pressure people are up against maybe.

Programs such as Leadership 2000 are giving women teachers the confidence to believe in themselves and their abilities to hold administrative positions but not all school districts have implemented such programs. The current financial situation in the province may reduce the level of funding allocated to such activities at the school district level.

The networking process which takes place at the Women in Educational Leadership conferences held every few months gives women in or interested in administration an opportunity to meet other women with similar interests. But only so many women from each school district can attend at any one time. Again, the level of funding available for conferences may be curtailed in future years.

Although the participants did not think of becoming administrators initially, once they had obtained positions they worked hard to prepare for those positions and took their roles seriously. They indicated that prior positions of responsibility and involvement in community and professional activities were important in gaining insight into the realities of leadership and organization.

As administrators the participants took their responsibilities seriously and placed a high priority on doing a good job at all times. The topics that were introduced give insight into what were considered the important qualities of administrators and what was important

to them in carrying out their roles as educational leaders. Considerable focus was placed on good communication and good personal relationships. Continued involvement with students was central to many of the discussions. It was clear that most of the participants regarded themselves primarily as teachers and providing a sound education for their students was central to their conception of administration. Some voiced the concern that becoming bureaucratic would be counter productive. Such a style was seen as opposed to the collaborative school environment they were creating. Others discussed the advantage of having a female persona in the school office. Having both a female and a male as principal and vice-principal provided a more rounded and complete leadership for the school. One individual could not meet all the needs.

The initial denial of the existence of barriers or obstacles by most of the participants was interesting. Similar findings were noted by Schmuck and Schubert (1986) in their study of female principals in Arizona, Oregon and California. In the New Brunswick situation the denial could be an indication that indeed there are no barriers to women obtaining administrative positions in New Brunswick. Any woman who has the qualifications, applies for the position and is the best candidate, is appointed to the position. The overall impression of all the participants was that they had the support of the school district central office. However these same participants described experiences which

could be considered barriers or obstacles to either obtaining a position or functioning successfully as an administrator.

As this study was conducted with volunteers it is possible that this group represents only those administrators who feel positive about their experiences. It is possible that this group of participants represents the "favored ones", the ones who are supported and "promoted" by their school districts and that there are others who are not favored and are experiencing barriers.

A comment from one of the participants suggests that maybe there are some behaviours that are acceptable from women candidates for administrative positions and some that are not.

I actually worked with another lady who is a lot more aggressive in terms of making it know that she has the ability to be an administrator, is setting out to put herself in all the right positions, is really kind of selling herself . . . and she has had problems, she has yet to get into an administrative role, as a matter of fact we have interviewed for a couple of the same jobs . . . I sometimes wonder if she's too aggressive, too demanding and almost telling people that they've got to give her the job, that she's sort of overselling.

One participant suggested the reason so few indicated directly they had experienced barriers was because it was considered inappropriate to admit to problems.

The two who admitted to facing barriers mentioned community attitudes---perceptions that a high school principal is a big, strong man and women can't do it; and she was becoming more qualified than her husband and this could lead to a marriage break-up.

It may be that barriers and obstacles do exist but the participants do not identify them as such. Schmuck and Schubert (1986) noted similar examples. Having stated there were no barriers the participants describe situations on the job where the perceptions of some colleagues and community members could make the job more difficult. It is possible that these perceptions are an indication of a pervasive culture that says, "This is not a job for women." It is never spoken, never articulated but is always there in the background. The result is a "two pronged effect", dissuading women from applying for administrative positions and dissuading communities from appointing women to administrative positions.

The participants identified family responsibilities and women's perceptions of themselves as possible reasons for the low percentage of women in administration in the province.

It's not by and large what most teachers see themselves as doing, being administrators. They see themselves as being teachers and I think it's something that most people have the basic kinds of skills probably in teaching to become quite able administrators. Because it's an extension of those same skills that make you a good teacher that make you a good administrator too.

However, the overall impression of all the participants was that they had the support of the school district central office. Most of the barriers described were among colleagues and were embedded in others' perceptions of what was acceptable and what was not. Through their own

performance on the job and their determination these women were bringing their detractors around.

Many who opposed the government bursaries for women felt that such incentives reinforced the perception that women could not make it on their own. They saw the bursaries as contributing to the belief that women were appointed to administrative positions because they were women and not because they were the best candidates. There is evidence of a pervasive attitude that educational administration is a male profession, that barring a few exceptions, men make better administrators than women. The view that, particularly at the high school level, the principal must be a 'tough male, able to maintain control and exert authority. This suggests a certain kind of control and authority, based on "power over" and "fear of". Whether this conception of leadership is appropriate for school in the 1990s must be examined.

Yet to counteract the impression described above, the women administrators in the study are gaining support from their colleagues and winning over their opponents. They see themselves adding other characteristics and dimensions to the leadership in their schools. They see themselves as part of a team, with their principals and vice-principals, which makes for a stronger and more comprehensive administration. They appear to be bringing qualities to the practice of administration which benefit students, teachers, parents and support staff and thereby the whole school

organization. They are diverting the focus away from the administrator as a male authority figure, sole leaders and only decision maker to a broader conception of educational leadership.

More and more women take graduate level courses in educational administration at the University of New Brunswick, suggesting a growing interest. The University of New Brunswick is making efforts to recruit more women to its faculty. As a result, future teachers have a chance to interact with women who have obtained advanced degrees. The new Dean of Education is a woman with a PhD in Educational Administration and four of the six graduate directors in the Faculty of Education are women, including the graduate director for educational administration. This means that the Faculty is represented by a woman and when women enquire about graduate studies in educational administration, they talk to another woman.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons for the low representation of women in positions of educational leadership in the Province of New Brunswick. In depth interviews were conducted with twenty-nine women educators to discover what encouraged, motivated and supported them in their careers as educational leaders. The existence of possible barriers and obstacles to obtaining administrative positions was also discussed.

From the results of the study it can be concluded that:

- 1) Most women teachers spend longer in teaching positions before becoming administrators than men teachers. As a result they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to leadership positions.
- 2) Most women teachers do not enter teaching with the goal of becoming administrators. Interest in administration develops as a result of encouragement from colleagues and other administrators. Their interest in students and the instructional role continues.
- 3) Many strategies exist for women teachers to become familiar with administration but these strategies are not uniformly available in all school districts.
- 4) Barriers and obstacles to women becoming educational administrators do exist. They exist in the form of attitudes which claim that women cannot do the job or should not do the job, particularly at the junior high school and senior high school levels; a pervading image that an effective school administrator is a "tough guy" and society's expectation that women are still expected to shoulder the major responsibility for homemaking and child rearing.
- 5) Long term career planning is not a priority for many women teachers at the present time.
- 6) Women are making progress in gaining access to positions in educational administration in the Anglophone school districts in New Brunswick. It will be necessary to watch

that gains made in the past few years are not wiped out in years to come.

Implications

The results of this study suggest a number of strategies which could encourage more women to become administrators:

1. Encourage women teachers to think about administration well before positions of become vacant.
2. Actively recruit women teachers for leadership positions.
3. Let women teachers know all the skills they do have, including the value of the skills they have acquired while raising a family. Take a look at what women bring to administration and value those qualities.
4. Encourage women to become involved in various professional organizations and professional development workshops.
5. Continue to support these workshops and professional organizations.
6. Continue to build and extend the networks initiated through such organizations as Women in Administration.
7. Demystify educational administration by describing and explaining what is involved and by giving women teachers the opportunity to become involved in administrative tasks in the schools.

8. Project the image of an educational leader which includes and values the qualities of humanity, cooperation and sensitivity.
9. Encourage alternative school structures which include participative decision making and the development of leadership skills for all teachers.

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